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SENSITIVE
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SUBJECT: SPLM'S AMUM PAUSES PROTESTS, VOWS CONTINUED OPPOSITION

REF: A) KHARTOUM 1370
B) KHARTOUM 1363
C) KHARTOUM 1359

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Opposition party protests will continue until outstanding CPA implementation issues are resolved, Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) Secretary General Pagan Amum told DCM Asquino on December 9. While Amum has decided to hold off on leading any protests in Khartoum in the hope that Government of Southern Sudan (GOSS) leadership can negotiate a solution with the ruling National Congress Party (NCP) (Note: GOSS President Salva Kiir, originally scheduled to come to Khartoum on December 9 will now arrive on December 10. End note.) Amum told poloff that GOSS Vice President Riek Machar was now extremely pessimistic after receiving an "empty" offer from the NCP early this morning. Amum also reflected upon the perceived racial overtones of the beating of SPLM Head of Northern Sector Yasir Arman, saying they were designed to "humiliate" rather than hurt him. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) Amum told DCM that he expects the SPLM to hold more peaceful marches until the Government of National Unity (GNU) National Assembly can be persuaded to pass outstanding laws, including the Referendum Laws for Southern Sudan and Abyei. However, he stated he had agreed to hold off on another protest in Khartoum "for the time being" to give Machar and GOSS President Salva Kiir the chance to negotiate a solution. Amum later told poloff that while Machar was upbeat last night upon receiving news of a potential new "package deal" offer from the NCP, he was downtrodden upon receiving the "empty" offer this morning. "There was no gift inside," said Amum. (Note: Machar's discussion with CDA Whitehead on December 9 to be reported in septel. End note.)

¶3. (SBU) Amum nonetheless expressed confidence that additional protests would eventually force a breakthrough in the deadlock between the two parties. He noted that protests would continue in Southern Sudan, with planned demonstrations in Rumbek on December 9, Bentiu on December 10 and Aweil shortly thereafter, and that barring a solution he would continue to lead protests in Khartoum. "You are welcome to visit me at my new hotel in town," he joked, "a government jail."

¶4. (SBU) Amum also reflected upon his arrest on December 7 and the beating of Arman, which he said had strong racial overtones. Amum said that Arman was pulled from his holding cell at the police detention facility and taunted by a Government of Sudan (GOS) police officer who called him "a traitor" for "betraying" his Northern Sudanese brethren to help the "slaves" of Southern Sudan. The beating was designed not to hurt him, but rather to humiliate Arman and "break his spirit," he said. Arman declined to file a formal complaint against the officer, said Amum, because he is a "victim of indoctrination" of the systemic racism of the NCP regime.

¶5. (SBU) Comment: Given his record to date, Amum will probably continue to stir the pot to heighten political tensions in Khartoum

as well as the South. A temporary delay in protests in Khartoum is nonetheless a welcome respite since it will give both parties an opportunity to reflect on what has become a more volatile situation. This process may already be underway. We have learned that a meeting between the SPLM's Riek Machar, Malik Agar and Luka Biong and the NCP's Ali Osman Taha and South Kordofan Governor Ahmed Haroun (who launched the pre-negotiation contact) went deep into the morning of December 10, with Kiir and Bashir slated to meet later in the day. A best case scenario might be that the recent political convulsion has given impetus to the stalled legislative/political package. We do not know what this outcome would due to Amum's new strategy, which has abandoned the rhetoric of returning to the bush in exchange for the embrace of Ghandian principles of non-violent protest, which Amum has reportedly taken to heart. End comment.

WHITEHEAD